BLITZ PHOENIX

CHAPTER 2: UNEXPECTED RESULTS

Emily Brackhan

http://www.arccuit.com/

WE'RE AT THE AIRPORT NOW. EVERYTHING WENT SMOOTHLY. WE'LL BE THERE IN ABOUT SEVENTEEN HOURS.
I WANT YOU TO START PREPPING THE EQUIPMENT.
SO HE'S AGREED TO TAKE PART?
YES, HE WAS VERY EXCITED ABOUT IT.
WONDERFUL. WE'LL SEE YOU ONCE YOU LAND.

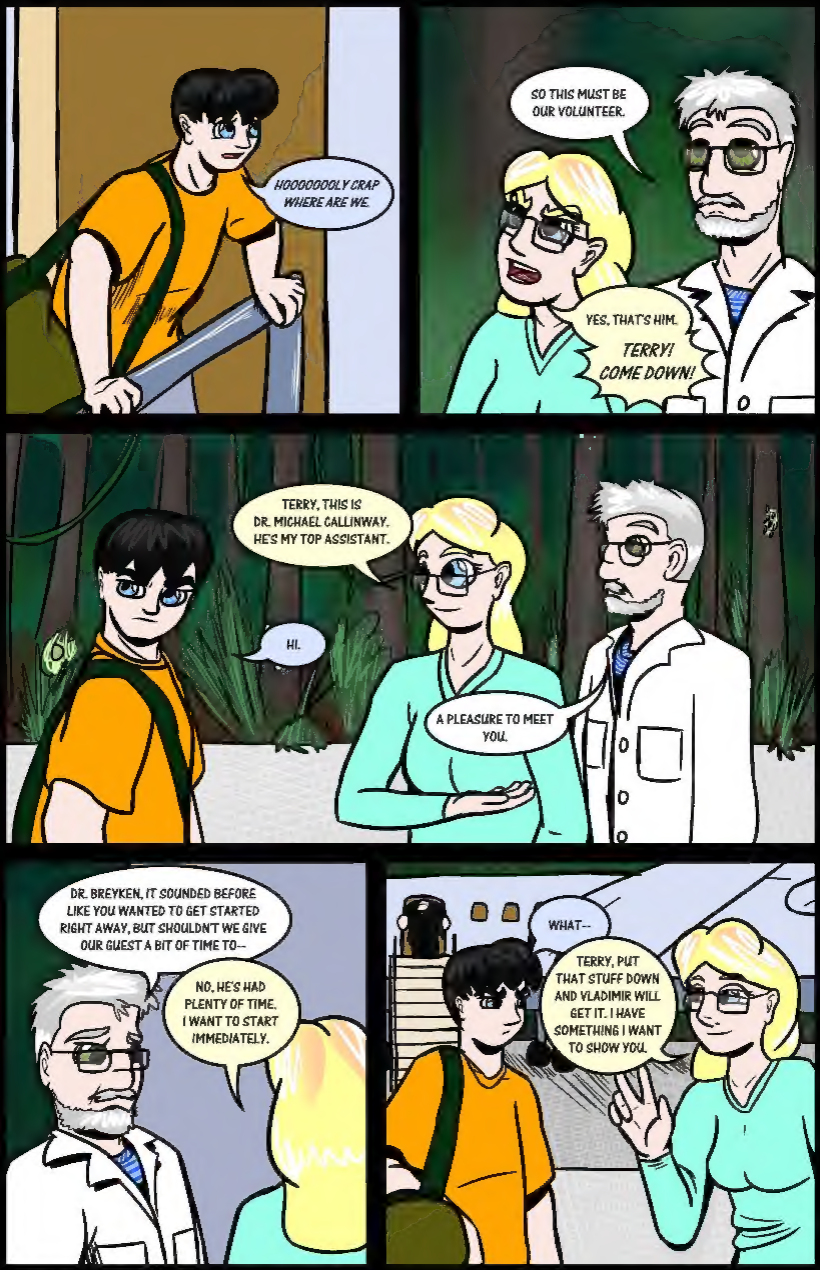
THIS IS EXCITING, HUH? MY OFFICE SENT A PRIVATE PLANE FOR US.
IT'LL BE A LONG TRIP, SO MAKE SURE YOU HAVE EVERYTHING YOU NEED.
HAVE YOU EVER FLOWN BEFORE?
LOOK, I KNOW YOU'RE UPSET. BUT EVERYTHING'S GOING TO GET BETTER.
YOU'LL LIKE IT IN FLORIDA. YOU'LL SEE.
DON'T TOUCH ME.
WELL THEN. I NEED TO TALK TO THE PILOT FOR A MOMENT.
MAYBE YOU'LL HAVE REMEMBERED YOUR MANNERS BY THE TIME I GET BACK.

I KNOW WHAT YOU'RE GOING THROUGH, KID. WHEN I WAS YOUR AGE, I LOST MY DAD, TOO.
HAD A HORRIBLE DRUG ADDICTION. ONE DAY HE JUST COULDN'T TAKE IT ANYMORE AND BLEW HIS BRAINS OUT.
SO IF YOU WANT TO TALK, I'M HERE FOR YA, KID.
...
A'IGHT. THAT'S FINE IF YOU DON'T--
WHAT THE HELL IS SO IMPORTANT THAT WE COULDN'T STAY FOR THE FUNERAL?

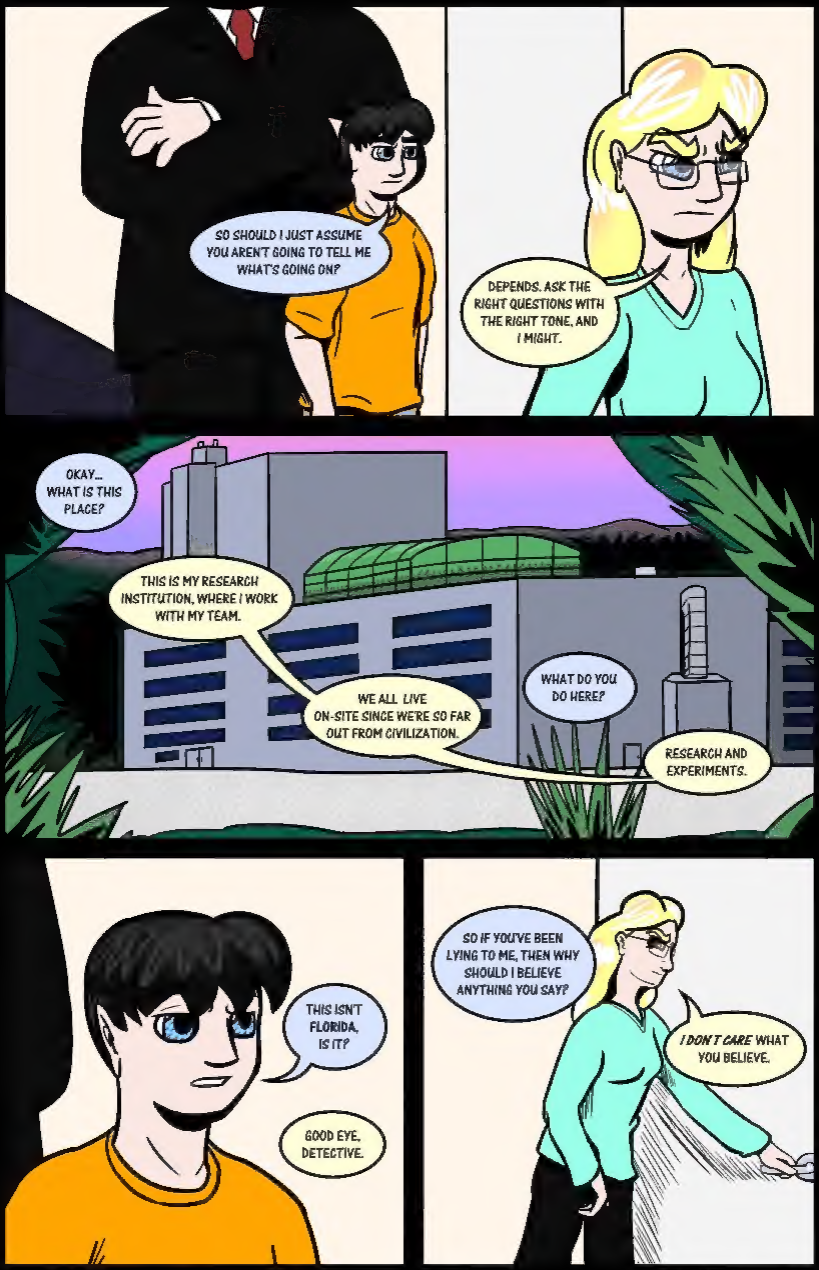
OH, YOUR MOM'S REAL BUSY, SEE. SHE'S GOT A LOT OF PEOPLE DEPENDING ON HER.
BUT HAS ENOUGH TIME IN HER SCHEDULE TO COME AND VISIT THE SON SHE'S NEVER CARED ABOUT BEFORE.
AND CONVENIENTLY RIGHT BEFORE HER HUSBAND KILLS HIMSELF.
A *TRAGIC* COINCIDENCE.
YOU REALLY EXPECT ME TO BELIEVE THAT CRAP?
THINK WHATEVER YOU WANT, KID. BUT THINGS'LL BE EASIER IF YOU JUST DO WHAT YOUR MOM WANTS.
...SAYS HER MOOSE OF A LACKY.
NOW THAT AIN'T NICE. YOU NEED TO CHECK YOUR TONGUE OR YOU AND I ARE GOING TO HAVE PROBLEMS.
WE ALREADY DO, MOOSE.

MY NAME'S YULE, AND I'LL THANK YOU TO CALL ME THAT.
WHY ARE YOU EVEN HERE?
I'M YOUR MOM'S BODYGUARD.
WHAT'S SHE NEED A BODYGUARD FOR?
OH, YOU KNOW.
LOTS OF CREEPS OUT THERE, SO AN IMPORTANT WOMAN LIKE AMANDA NEEDS SOMEONE TO WATCH HER BACK.
AND TO HELP HER KIDNAP HER SON, RIGHT?
eyeroll
YOU AREN'T GETTING KIDNAPPED.
LOOK, IF YOU KEEP THINKING THE WORLD'S OUT TO GET YOU, THEN YOU'LL HAVE ONE HELL OF A STRESSFUL LIFE. TRUST ME ON THAT.
SHK
WHAT HAPPENED TO YOUR DAD WAS REAL UNFORTUNATE, BUT YOUR MOM'S PLANNING ON TAKING CARE OF EVERYTHING.
IT'S GOING TO BE FINE. IN TWO DAYS, YOU WON'T BE WORRYING ABOUT ANY OF THIS STUFF ANYMORE.
SHUNK

I'M PRETTY SURE IT DOESN'T TAKE TWENTY HOURS TO FLY FROM OHIO TO FLORIDA.
I ALREADY TOLD YOU, WE HAD TO STOP IN NEVADA TO DROP OFF SUPPLIES. PART OF USING A COMPANY PLANE.
BUT THAT DOESN'T
MAKE... ANY SENSE...
SURE IT DOES, YOU'RE JUST TOO STUBBORN TO SEE PAST YOUR OWN PERSONAL PROBLEMS.
DR. BREYKEN! WELCOME BACK!
HOW WAS YOUR TRIP?
WELL ENOUGH, THANK YOU. BUT I'M TERRIBLY SICK OF PLANES AND KIDS.
I CAN IMAGINE.


HOOOOOOLY CRAP WHERE ARE WE.
SO THIS MUST BE OUR VOLUNTEER.
YES. THAT'S HIM. TERRY! COME DOWN!
TERRY, THIS IS DR. MICHAEL CALLINWAY. HE'S MY TOP ASSISTANT.
HI.
A PLEASURE TO MEET YOU.
DR. BREYKEN, IT SOUNDED BEFORE LIKE YOU WANTED TO GET STARTED RIGHT AWAY, BUT SHOULDN'T WE GIVE OUR GUEST A BIT OF TIME TO--
NO, HE'S HAD PLENTY OF TIME. I WANT TO START IMMEDIATELY.
WHAT--
TERRY, PUT THAT STUFF DOWN AND VLADIMIR WILL GET IT. I HAVE SOMETHING I WANT TO SHOW YOU.

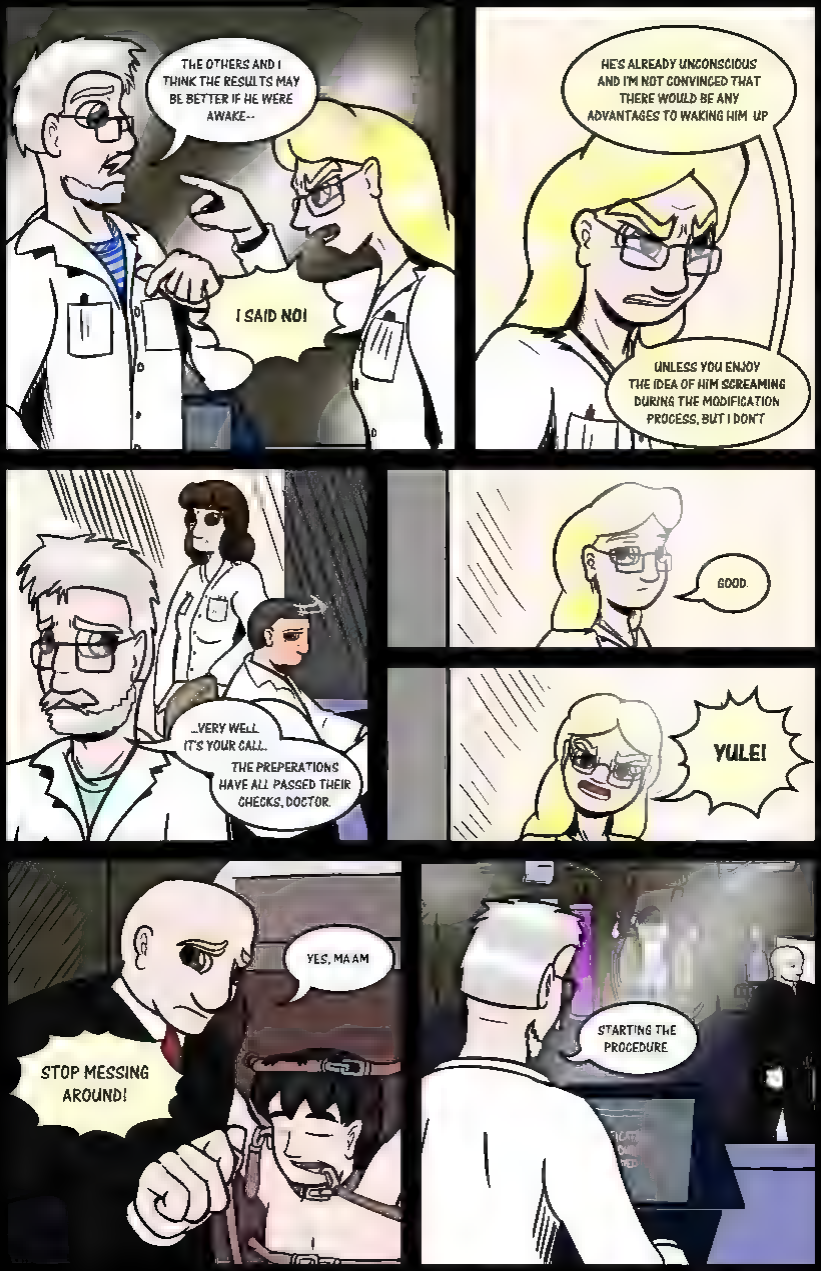
WHO'S VLAD--
SHHK
AH!
WHAT'S WITH ALL THE FREAKING GIANTS IN THIS PLACE?
YOU PEOPLE LOOKING TO START A CIRCUS OR SOMETHING?
I THOUGHT I TOLD YOU THAT ISN'T NICE.
NICE? DON'T GET ME STARTED, JUMBO.
DR. CALLINWAY, PLEASE GO CHECK WITH THE OTHERS. MAKE SURE THEY'RE READY TO START SOON. I'LL PREP OUR VOLUNTEER.
YES, OF COURSE.
TERRY, STOP HARRASSING MY ASSISTANTS AND COME WITH ME.
WE'RE GOING TO TAKE A QUICK TOUR.
SHOVE
GET GOING, SHRIMP.

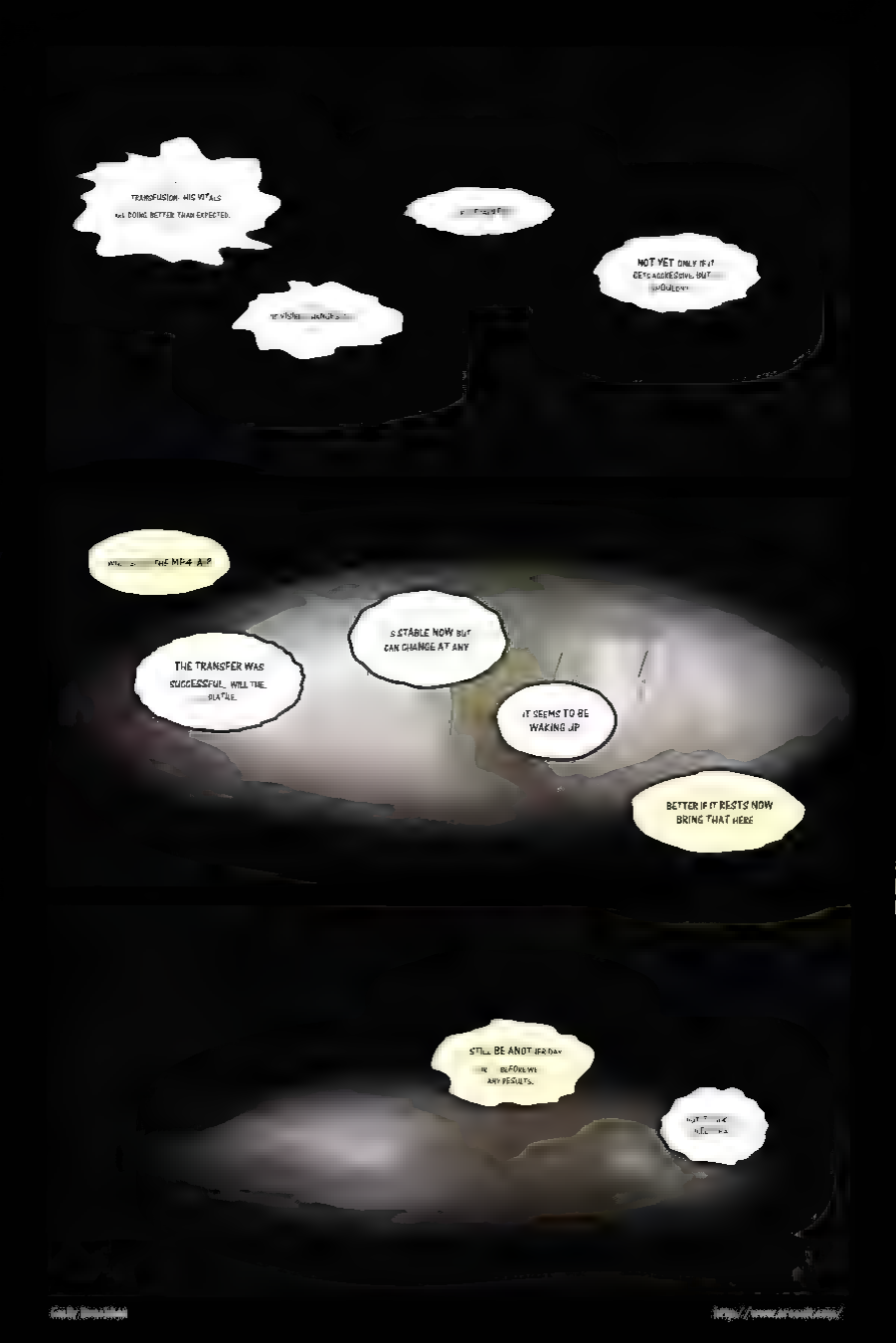

SO SHOULD I JUST ASSUME YOU AREN'T GOING TO TELL ME WHAT'S GOING ON?
DEPENDS. ASK THE RIGHT QUESTIONS WITH THE RIGHT TONE, AND I MIGHT.
OKAY... WHAT IS THIS PLACE?
THIS IS MY RESEARCH INSTITUTION, WHERE I WORK WITH MY TEAM.
WE ALL LIVE ON-SITE SINCE WE'RE SO FAR OUT FROM CIVILIZATION.
WHAT DO YOU DO HERE?
RESEARCH AND EXPERIMENTS.
THIS ISN'T FLORIDA, IS IT?
GOOD EYE, DETECTIVE.
SO IF YOU'VE BEEN LYING TO ME, THEN WHY SHOULD I BELIEVE ANYTHING YOU SAY?
I DON'T CARE WHAT YOU BELIEVE.

IN HERE.
click
SLAM
H-HEY! LET GO!
HOLD STILL KID
OW! WHAT ARE YOU DOING?!
THAT STUFF WORKS PRETTY FAST, HUH?
AND WHAT DO YOU SAY IF ANYONE ASKS?
HE REQUESTED ANESTHESIA?
GOOD BOY

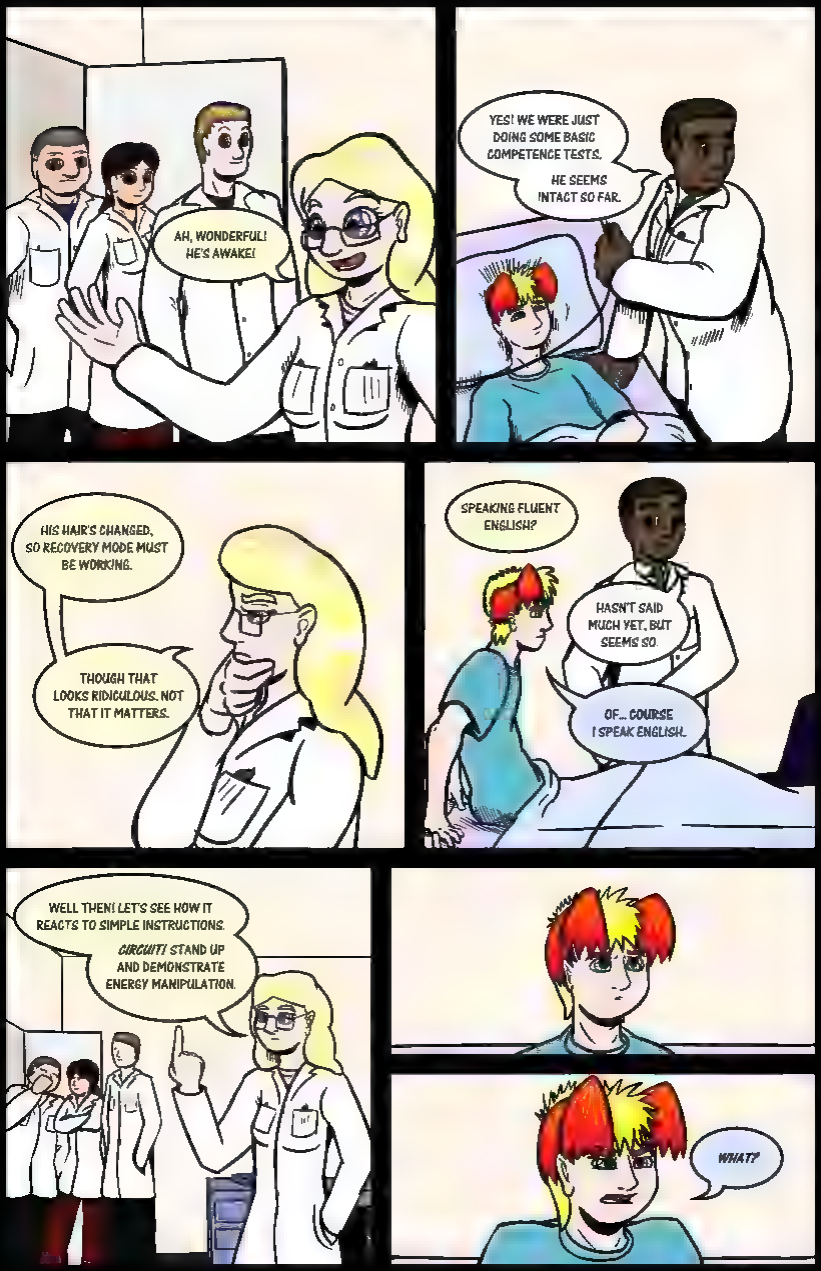
HM?
UNCONSCIOUS AGAIN?
THOUGHT AMANDA AGREED THAT WASN'T WORKING?
YEAH, SHE DID
HOW MUCH LONGER UNTIL WE'RE READY?

DR. BREYKEN, I THOUGHT WE DECIDED TO DO THIS PROCEDURE WITH A CONSCIOUS SUBJECT?
I DON'T REMEMBER DISCUSSING THAT.
IT WAS A FEW MEETINGS AGO. I HAVE THE NOTES--
IF IT WAS DISCUSSED, THEN I DISAGREED WITH IT THEN, JUST AS I AM NOW.
YOU'RE A LOT LESS ANNOYING WHEN YOU'RE DRUGGED UP
Clik
Clik
ALL SET! THANKS FOR *VOLUNTEERING*, KID
SAY HI TO YOUR DAD FOR ME

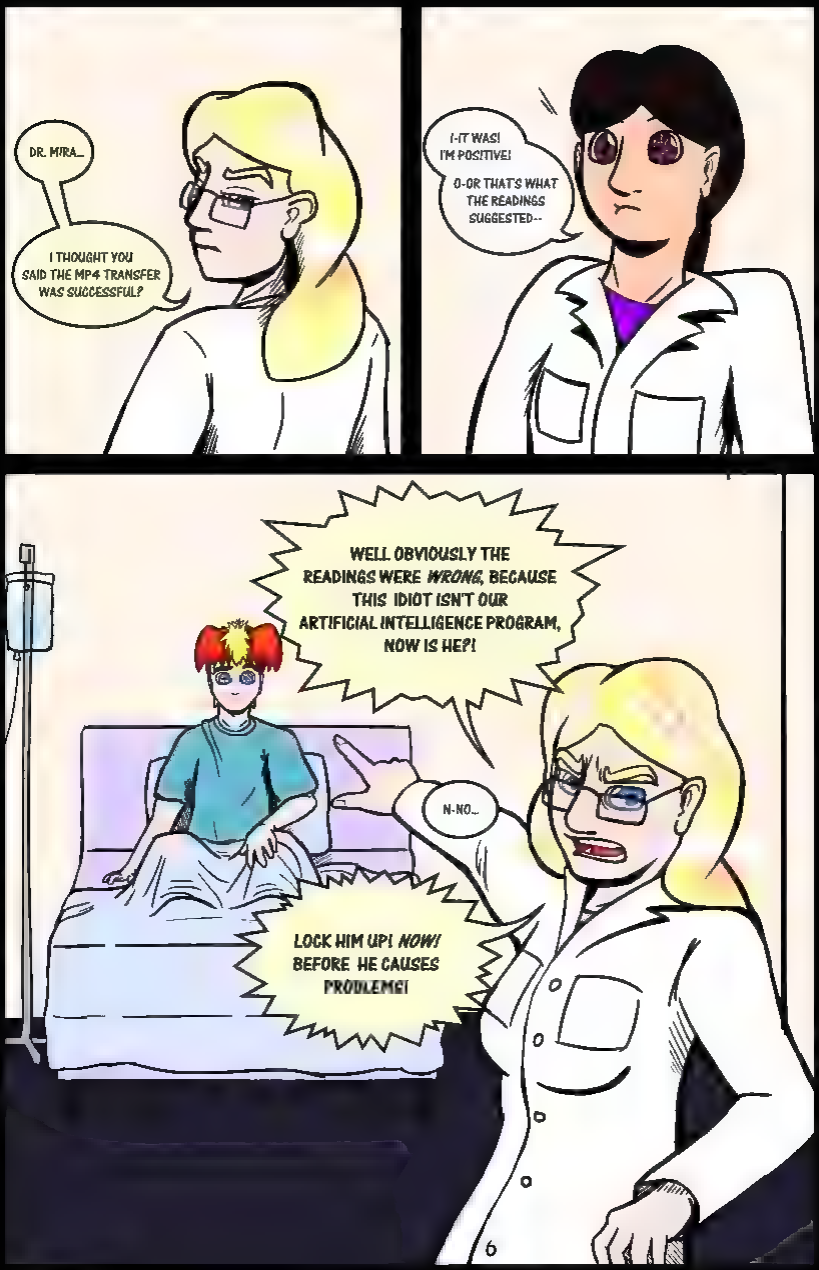

THE OTHERS AND I THINK THE RESULTS MAY BE BETTER IF HE WERE AWAKE--
I SAID NO!
HE'S ALREADY UNCONSCIOUS AND I'M NOT CONVINCED THAT THERE WOULD BE ANY ADVANTAGES TO WAKING HIM UP
UNLESS YOU ENJOY THE IDEA OF HIM SCREAMING DURING THE MODIFICATION PROCESS, BUT I DON'T
...VERY WELL. IT'S YOUR CALL.
THE PREPERATIONS HAVE ALL PASSED THEIR CHECKS, DOCTOR.
GOOD.
YULE!
YES, MAAM
STOP MESSING AROUND!
STARTING THE PROCEDURE


TRANSFUSION. HIS VITALS
ARE DOING BETTER THAN EXPECTED.
NOT YET. ONLY IF IT GETS AGGRESSIVE, BUT
STABLE NOW BUT CAN CHANGE AT ANY
THE TRANSFER WAS SUCCESSFUL. WITH THE
IT SEEMS TO BE WAKING UP
BETTER IF IT RESTS NOW BRING THAT HERE
STILL BE ANOTHER DAY
BEFORE WE

THREE DAYS LATER
LOOKS LIKE CONSCIOUS ACTIVITY IS PICKING BACK UP
GO TELL DR. BREYKEN HE'LL BE WAKING UP SOON.
RIGHT
WAKE UP, SLEEPING BEAUTY
..HM?
HI THERE! NOW, HOW MANY FINGERS AM I HOLDING UP?
...THREE?
GREAT! AND WHAT COLOR IS THE SKY?
BLUE.
FANTASTIC.
WHAT HAPPENED--
NO, NO! STAY DOWN.
JUST RELAX FOR A BIT, WE NEED TO TAKE THESE OFF YOU BEFORE YOU CAN START MOVING AROUND.

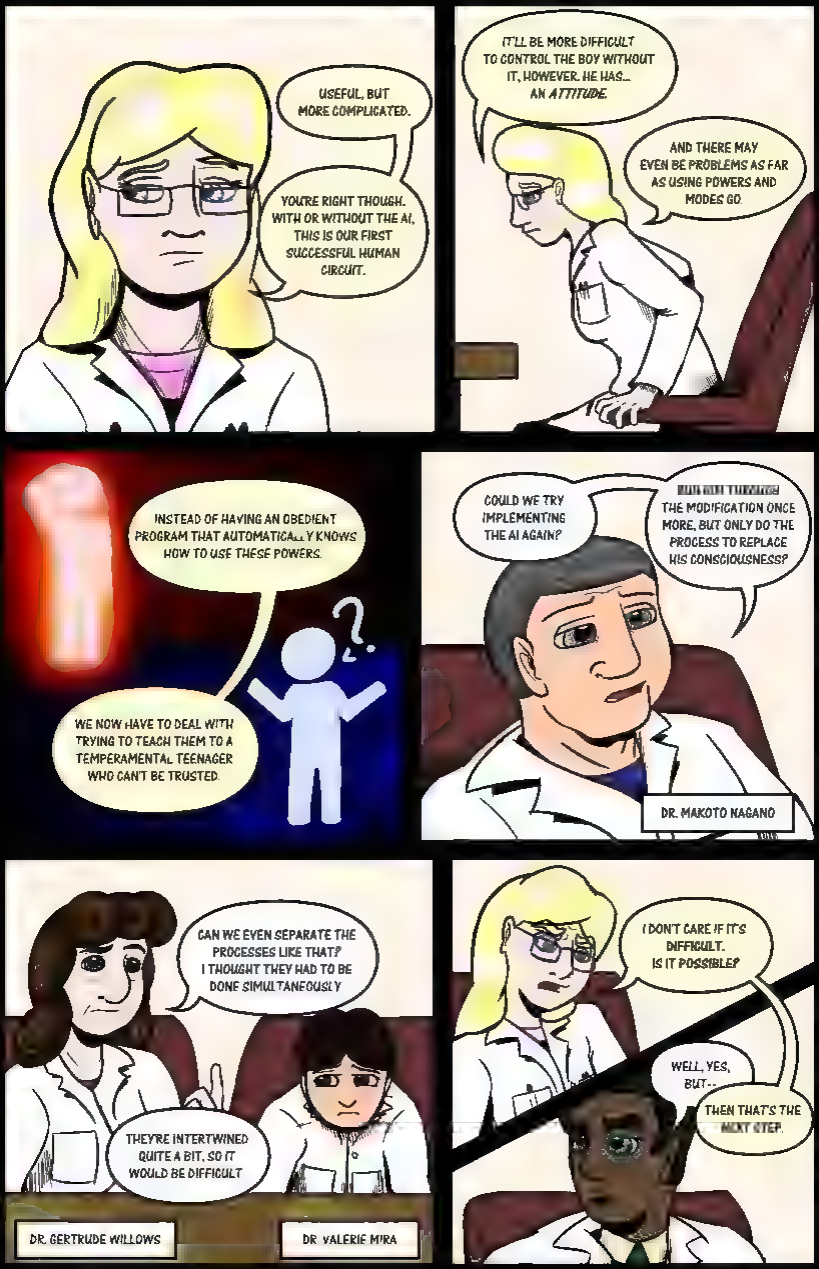

AH, WONDERFUL! HE'S AWAKE!
YES! WE WERE JUST DOING SOME BASIC COMPETENCE TESTS.
HE SEEMS INTACT SO FAR.
HIS HAIR'S CHANGED. SO RECOVERY MODE MUST BE WORKING.
THOUGH THAT LOOKS RIDICULOUS. NOT THAT IT MATTERS.
SPEAKING FLUENT ENGLISH?
HASN'T SAID MUCH YET, BUT SEEMS SO
OF... COURSE I SPEAK ENGLISH.
WELL THEN! LET'S SEE HOW IT REACTS TO SIMPLE INSTRUCTIONS.
CIRCUIT! STAND UP AND DEMONSTRATE ENERGY MANIPULATION.
WHAT?

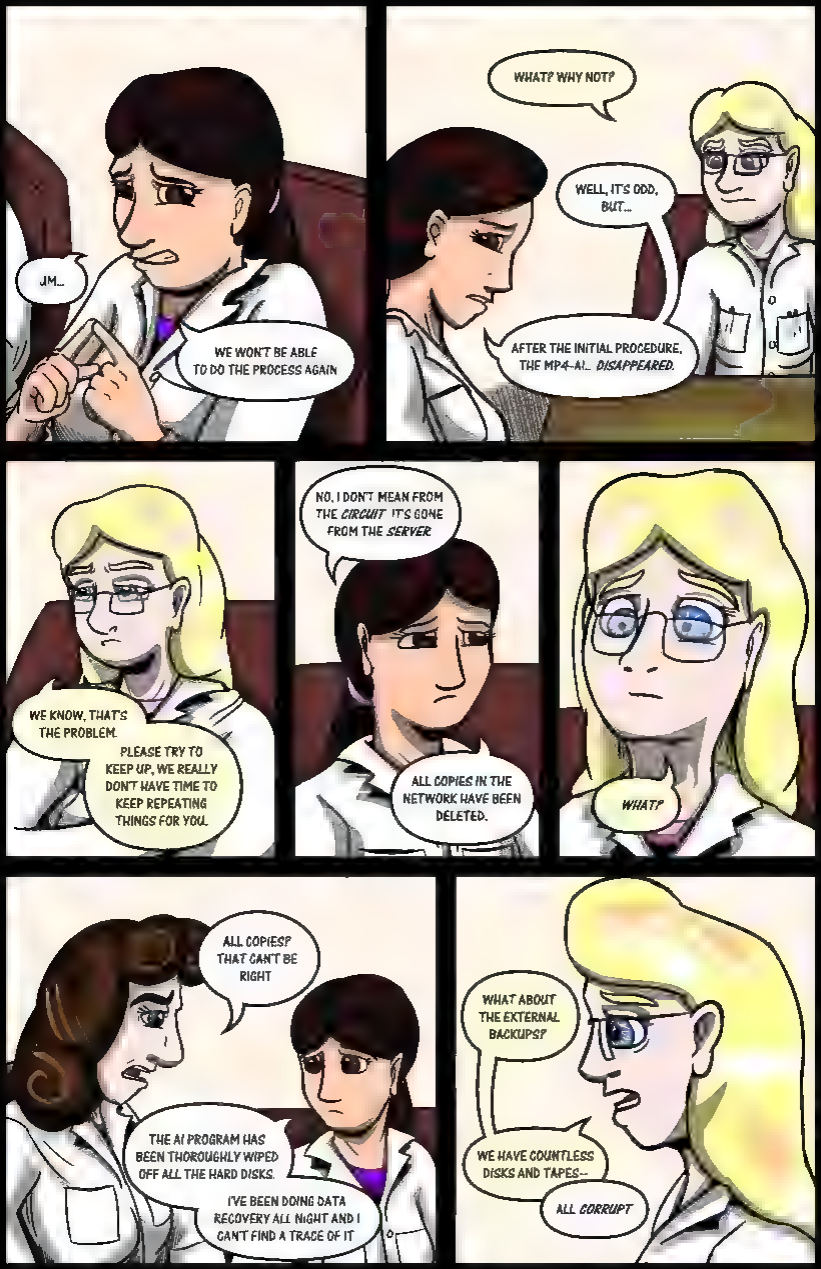
OKAY, LET'S START WITH JUST STAND UP.
ARE YOU TALKING TO ME?
OF COURSE I AM!
THEN WHAT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT?
WHAT THE HELL IS THIS?
IS THERE A PROBLEM?
OF COURSE THERE'S A PROBLEM! IT'S BACK-TALKING.
IT'S DEFINITELY NOT SUPPOSED TO DO THAT.
IT'S ALMOST AS IF--
.. WHAT'S YOUR NAME?
UH, TERRY? I'M YOUR SON, REMEMBER?
WAIT. WHAT DID HE SAY?

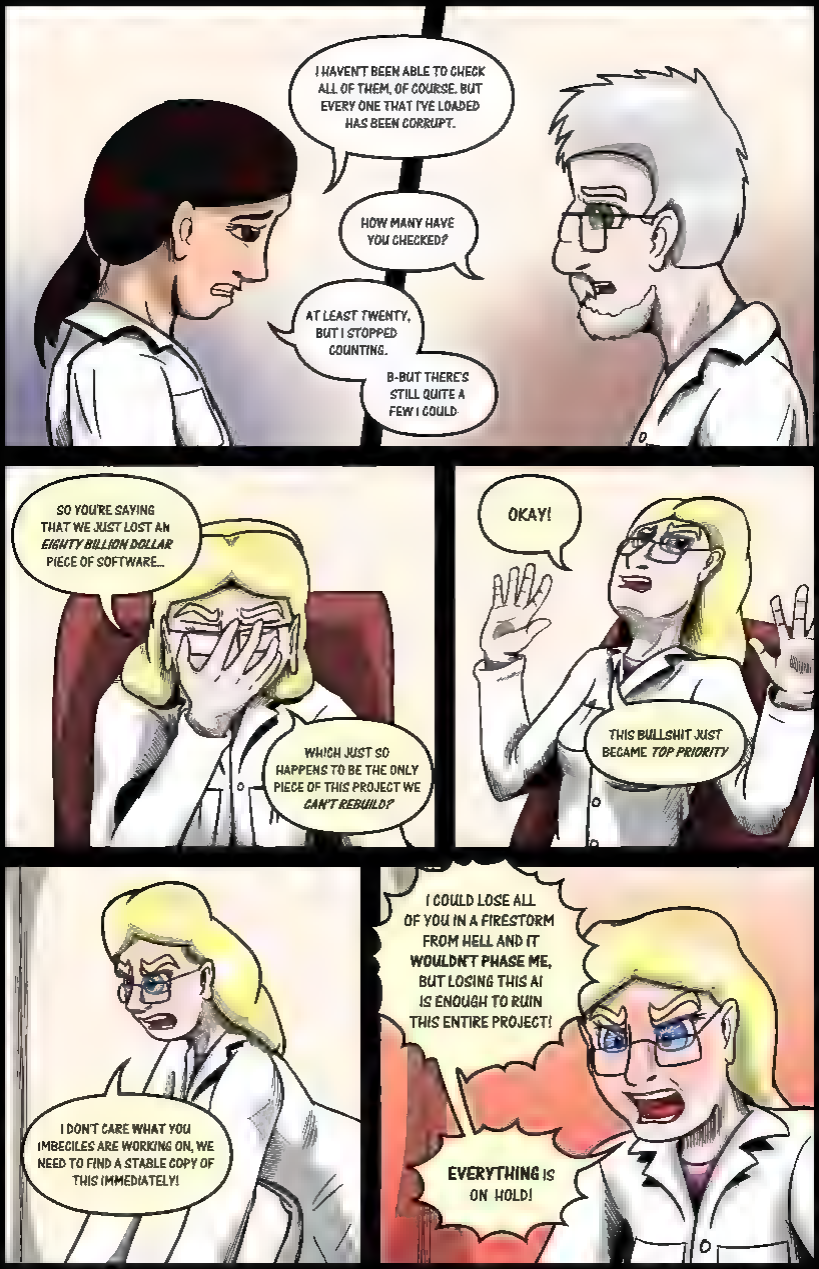

DR. MIRA...
I THOUGHT YOU SAID THE MP4 TRANSFER WAS SUCCESSFUL?
I-IT WAS! I'M POSITIVE!
O-OR THAT'S WHAT THE READINGS SUGGESTED--
WELL OBVIOUSLY THE READINGS WERE *WRONG*, BECAUSE THIS IDIOT ISN'T OUR ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE PROGRAM, NOW IS HE?!
N-NO...
LOCK HIM UP! *NOW!* BEFORE HE CAUSES PROBLEMS!

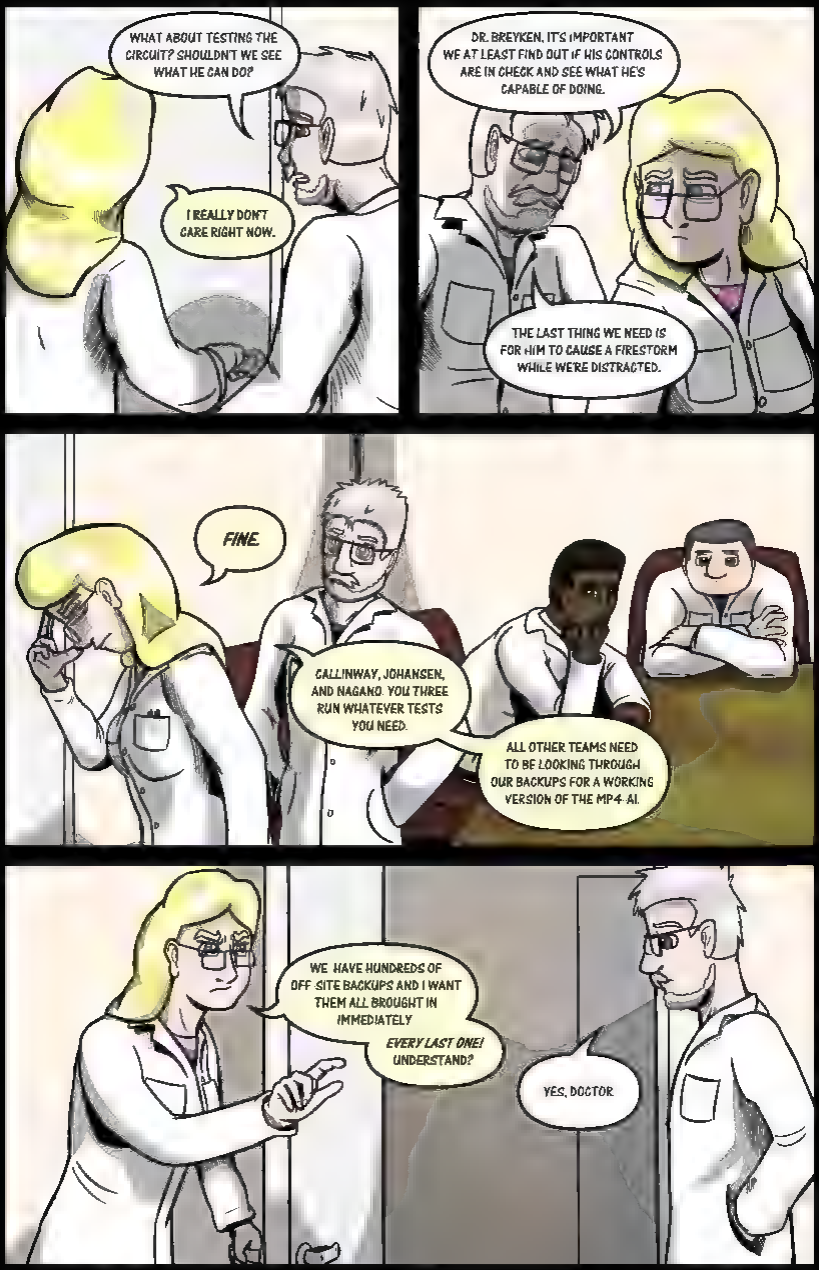
TNK
HEY!
COME BACK! LET ME OUT!
FAN FUCKING TASTIC

I ASSUME THAT MOST OF YOU KNOW WHY I CALLED THIS MEETING.
BUT FOR OUR SLOW LEARNERS, I'LL SPELL IT OUT FOR YOU.
THE MP4-AJ ISN'T IN CONTROL OF THE CIRCUIT. IT'S STILL THE BOY.
I WANT TO KNOW *WHY*.
IT'S PROBABLY BECAUSE *YOU* BROUGHT IN A VOLUNTEER THAT'S *TOO OLD*.
DR. GREGORY JOHANSEN
HE ISN'T *TOO OLD*. IF HE WERE, HE WOULD HAVE *DIED*.
HIS BODY IS THE BEST SUITED TO THE MODIFICATION PROCESS OUT OF ALL THE HUMAN SUBJECTS WE'VE USED TO DATE.
IF YOU'RE GOING TO OPEN YOUR MOUTH, AT LEAST HAVE SOMETHING USEFUL TO SAY
HEY, LET'S STAY CALM! MAYBE WE DON'T KNOW WHAT HAPPENED YET, BUT IT WASN'T A COMPLETE LOSS.
HE'S STILL THE FIRST HUMAN SUBJECT TO SURVIVE! THAT'S GOOD NEWS, RIGHT?
WE CAN STILL TURN THIS AROUND AND MAKE IT USEFUL.


USEFUL, BUT MORE COMPLICATED.
YOU'RE RIGHT THOUGH. WITH OR WITHOUT THE AI, THIS IS OUR FIRST SUCCESSFUL HUMAN CIRCUIT.
IT'LL BE MORE DIFFICULT TO CONTROL THE BOY WITHOUT IT, HOWEVER. HE HAS... AN ATTITUDE.
AND THERE MAY EVEN BE PROBLEMS AS FAR AS USING POWERS AND MODES GO.
INSTEAD OF HAVING AN OBEDIENT PROGRAM THAT AUTOMATICALLY KNOWS HOW TO USE THESE POWERS.
WE NOW HAVE TO DEAL WITH TRYING TO TEACH THEM TO A TEMPERAMENTAL TEENAGER WHO CAN'T BE TRUSTED.
COULD WE TRY IMPLEMENTING THE AI AGAIN?
[illegible] THE MODIFICATION ONCE MORE, BUT ONLY DO THE PROCESS TO REPLACE HIS CONSCIOUSNESS?
DR. MAKOTO NAGANO
CAN WE EVEN SEPARATE THE PROCESSES LIKE THAT? I THOUGHT THEY HAD TO BE DONE SIMULTANEOUSLY
THEY'RE INTERTWINED QUITE A BIT, SO IT WOULD BE DIFFICULT
DR. GERTRUDE WILLOWS
DR. VALERIE MIRA
I DON'T CARE IF IT'S DIFFICULT. IS IT POSSIBLE?
WELL, YES, BUT--
THEN THAT'S THE NEXT STEP.


JIM...
WE WON'T BE ABLE TO DO THE PROCESS AGAIN
WHAT? WHY NOT?
WELL, IT'S ODD, BUT...
AFTER THE INITIAL PROCEDURE, THE MP4-AI... DISAPPEARED.
WE KNOW, THAT'S THE PROBLEM.
PLEASE TRY TO KEEP UP, WE REALLY DON'T HAVE TIME TO KEEP REPEATING THINGS FOR YOU.
NO, I DON'T MEAN FROM THE CIRCUIT. IT'S GONE FROM THE SERVER.
ALL COPIES IN THE NETWORK HAVE BEEN DELETED.
WHAT?
ALL COPIES? THAT CAN'T BE RIGHT
THE AI PROGRAM HAS BEEN THOROUGHLY WIPED OFF ALL THE HARD DISKS.
I'VE BEEN DOING DATA RECOVERY ALL NIGHT AND I CAN'T FIND A TRACE OF IT
WHAT ABOUT THE EXTERNAL BACKUPS?
WE HAVE COUNTLESS DISKS AND TAPES--
ALL CORRUPT


I HAVEN'T BEEN ABLE TO CHECK ALL OF THEM, OF COURSE. BUT EVERY ONE THAT I'VE LOADED HAS BEEN CORRUPT.
HOW MANY HAVE YOU CHECKED?
AT LEAST TWENTY, BUT I STOPPED COUNTING.
B-BUT THERE'S STILL QUITE A FEW I COULD
SO YOU'RE SAYING THAT WE *JUST* LOST AN *EIGHTY BILLION DOLLAR* PIECE OF SOFTWARE...
WHICH JUST SO HAPPENS TO BE THE ONLY PIECE OF THIS PROJECT WE *CAN'T REBUILD?*
OKAY!
THIS BULLSHIT JUST BECAME *TOP PRIORITY*
I DON'T CARE WHAT YOU IMBECILES ARE WORKING ON, WE NEED TO FIND A STABLE COPY OF THIS IMMEDIATELY!
I COULD LOSE ALL OF YOU IN A FIRESTORM FROM HELL AND IT **WOULDN'T PHASE ME,** BUT LOSING THIS AI IS ENOUGH TO RUIN THIS ENTIRE PROJECT!
EVERYTHING IS ON HOLD!


WHAT ABOUT TESTING THE CIRCUIT? SHOULDN'T WE SEE WHAT HE CAN DO?
I REALLY DON'T CARE RIGHT NOW.
DR. BREYKEN, IT'S IMPORTANT WE AT LEAST FIND OUT IF HIS CONTROLS ARE IN CHECK AND SEE WHAT HE'S CAPABLE OF DOING.
THE LAST THING WE NEED IS FOR HIM TO CAUSE A FIRESTORM WHILE WE'RE DISTRACTED.
FINE.
CALLINWAY, JOHANSEN, AND NAGANO. YOU THREE RUN WHATEVER TESTS YOU NEED.
ALL OTHER TEAMS NEED TO BE LOOKING THROUGH OUR BACKUPS FOR A WORKING VERSION OF THE MP4 AI.
WE HAVE HUNDREDS OF OFF SITE BACKUPS AND I WANT THEM ALL BROUGHT IN IMMEDIATELY
EVERY LAST ONE! UNDERSTAND?
YES, DOCTOR.

CHRIST WHAT A MESS
HOW LONG DO YOU THINK VALERIE WAS GOING TO KEEP QUIET ABOUT LOSING THE AI?
I'M SURE SHE'D RATHER TAKE IT TO HER GRAVE THAN TELL AMANDA.
CAN'T SAY I BLAME HER. AMANDA SEEMS TO BE GETTING CRAZIER BY THE DAY
AT LEAST YOU'RE ABLE TO TALK A LITTLE SENSE INTO HER EVERY NOW AND THEN, MIKE. OTHERWISE WE'D NEVER GET ANYTHING DONE AROUND HERE
SO HOW ARE WE SUPPOSED TO GET THIS KID TO LEARN TO USE HIS NEW POWERS, ANYWAY?
I'M NOT A TEACHER AND I HATE KIDS
IT SHOULDN'T TAKE MORE THAN A FEW ADJUSTMENTS TO THE TESTS WE ALREADY HAD LINED UP. TRY NOT TO OVERTHINK IT

WHY DO YOU THINK AMANDA'S SO CONCERNED ABOUT DEALING WITH THIS KID?
SHE SEEMS TO THINK HE'S GOING TO BE A PROBLEM.
WELL IF HE'S HALF AS STUBBORN AS SHE IS THEN IT WILL BE
WHY WOULD HE BE?
WHEN HE WOKE UP HE SAID AMANDA WAS HIS MOTHER.
HIS MOTHER?
SHE BROUGHT HER OWN SON IN FOR THIS PROJECT?
YEAH, ABOUT THAT... I DIDN'T THINK SHE HAD ANY KIDS.
HOW DID SHE MANAGE THAT?
I BET SHE LAYS EGGS MAYBE EVEN SPITS THEM OUT OF THAT BIG MOUTH OF HERS
IF HE'S ANYTHING LIKE AMANDA, I MAY JUST LOSE MY MIND
SHE'S HARD ENOUGH TO DEAL WITH, WE DON'T NEED TWO OF THEM AROUND HERE
EH. A VOLUNTEER IS A VOLUNTEER. I DON'T REALLY CARE IF THEY'RE RELATED

UGH... WHY DOES MY HEAD FEEL SO WEIRD?
WHAT DID THEY DO TO ME?
THAT BALD GUY... PUSHED ME AGAINST A WALL...
I DON'T REMEMBER ANYTHING ELSE.
LOOKS LIKE I WAS RIGHT TO BE SUSPICIOUS. BUT NOW WHAT?
WHAT--
WHAT IS--
WHAT DID THEY DO TO MY HAIR?!

THAT WOMAN EARLIER SAID SOMETHING ABOUT EXPERIMENTS, BUT NOT WHAT KIND...
THIS ISN'T EXACTLY WHAT I WAS EXPECTING THOUGH.
HMM... NO HANDLES ON THE DOOR.
NO LIGHT SWITCHES EITHER...
THERE HAS TO BE *SOMETHING* I CAN--
SHK TKK
SHK SHH KMP
CRK KMP
KHMK SHRK
SHMP
SHRK

SNIFF
SNIFF
SNIFF
SSNK
Tch!
Kyu-!!
IS THAT SOME KIND OF DOG?
EUGH!
hchoo
ALEVI
BRAPH
CHUK
RUNK
crrrk
SNIFF
SNIFF
I GUESS I'LL BE GETTING MORE FAMILIAR WITH THESE EXPERIMENTS THAN I'D LIKE.
END

CHAPTER 2 BONUS PAGE

TERRY IS THE FIRST SUCCESSFUL HUMAN CIRCUIT CREATED BY AMANDA'S TEAM. OR, HE'S MOSTLY SUCCESSFUL, AT LEAST.

HUMAN TEST SUBJECTS ARE DIFFICULT TO FIND BECAUSE THEY NEED TO BE AT (OR JUST PAST) PUBERTY AGE. THEY MUST ALSO HAVE A HIGH TOLERANCE FOR THE VARIOUS CHEMICALS INJECTED DURING MODIFICATION AND ELECTRICAL SHOCK.

DUE TO THE LENGTHY MATURATION PERIOD OF HUMANS, AMANDA'S FACILITY HAS BEEN USING ANIMALS FOR MOST OF THEIR EXPERIMENTS.

THE LAB HAS CONTRACTS WITH NEARBY ANIMAL BREEDERS FOR SPECIFIC TRAITS TO ENSURE A PROPER MODIFICATION PROCESS.

DURING MODIFICATION, THE SUBJECT'S CONSCIOUS MIND IS OVERRIDDEN BY THE MP4-AI. THIS IS TO GUARANTEE THE OBEDIENCE OF THE CIRCUIT AND PREVENT BACKLASH.

THE AI CAN ALSO BE SWITCHED TO A REMOTE-CONTROLLED STATE, ALLOWING ANOTHER TO DIRECTLY COMMAND THE CIRCUIT.

THE POWERS AVAILABLE TO AN INDIVIDUAL CORRELATE TO WHAT ITS SPECIES IS.

FOR EXAMPLE, CANINE CIRCUITS HAVE THE ABILITY TO SENSE HIGH CONCENTRATIONS OF ELECTRICAL ENERGY UP TO FIVE HUNDRED YARDS AWAY, BUT HUMAN CIRCUITS DO NOT.

ON THE OTHER HAND, HUMAN CIRCUITS PRODUCE LARGE AMOUNTS OF ENERGY TO FUEL THEIR ABILITIES, WHILE CANINES DO NOT.